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SUBJECT: MARCH 14 QUINT MEETING ON AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JEFF RATHKE.
REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. SUMMARY. At a March 14 deputy director-level Quint meeting on Afghanistan in Berlin, all welcomed the appointment of Kai Eide as the new UN Special Representative for Afghanistan and agreed it was important to provide him as much support as possible. There was also agreement that the upcoming Paris Conference should not be just a pledging event, but also have a significant political component and serve as a mid-term review of the Afghanistan Compact. U.S. Afghanistan Coordinator Moon pointed out that the press was likely to focus on the pledging aspect of the Paris Conference and it was therefore important to generate donations in excess of the January 2006 London Conference total (\$10.5 billion). Quint members expressed disappointment that the 2009 and 2010 elections, because of political machinations in Kabul, were unlikely to be combined into one and agreed that the Afghans should come to the Paris Conference ready to "explain their game plan" for the elections. Also discussed at the meeting was the forthcoming Afghan National Development Strategy and the way forward on Afghan refugees. END SUMMARY.

Quint meeting

¶2. (C) The head of the German MFA Special Task Force for Afghanistan, Ambassador Michael Koch, hosted a half-day Quint meeting on Afghanistan in Berlin March 14. Representing the United States was State Department Afghanistan Coordinator Patrick Moon. Also in attendance were UK FCO Afghanistan Group Head Richard Codrington, French MFA Director for South Asia Didier Leroy, Italian MFA Special Afghanistan Envoy Sergio Mercuri and Canadian Political Counselor in Berlin Ian Shaw.

New UN Special Representative for Afghanistan

¶3. (C) Everyone welcomed the appointment of Norwegian MFA Political Director Kai Eide as the new UN Special Representative (SRSG) for Afghanistan and agreed it was important to support him so that he could fulfill the high expectations for this position. Moon noted that Eide would be visiting Washington in mid-April and that President Bush had already indicated an interest in meeting him. Secretary Rice and other senior U.S. officials would also be seeing him, depending on the schedules. Moon encouraged other allies to give Eide similar high-level access when he visited their capitals. Moon also noted that the U.S. would also discuss with Eide the possibility of seconding U.S. personnel and providing him additional resources if that would help him carry out his international coordination responsibilities.

¶4. (C) Codrington (UK) welcomed the fact that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was attending the NATO Summit in

Bucharest and thought this would serve as an excellent "launching pad" for Eide. He noted that like the U.S., the UK was considering making a voluntary national contribution to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to bolster Eide's staff. He thought it was important for all to reinforce the point that the UN plays "the key role" in Afghanistan. Leroy (France) and Shaw (Canada) emphasized the need for the SRSG to be seen as setting the strategic guidance for all UN agencies in Afghanistan, not just UNAMA. Koch (Germany) supported a stronger coordinating role for the SRSG, but said Eide would have to be careful not to offend Afghan sensibilities by seeming to place himself above them. (Note: In a separate meeting later at the German Chancellery, Deputy National Security Advisor Rolf Nikel emphasized that he saw Eide's role as primarily "steering things on the ground" in Afghanistan: "We don't need somebody coming to us in capitals to tell us what to do." End Note.)

15. (C) The Quint also briefly discussed current coordination mechanisms, agreeing that it would better to strengthen existing structures (particularly the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board) rather than inventing new ones. Codrington said the challenge was to make the JCMB's working groups more "action-oriented" than the "talking shops" they were now.

Paris Conference

16. (C) Leroy (France) said the timing of the conference was still in flux, but that June 12-13 were now the target dates.

The conference will be either inaugurated or closed by President Sarkozy and will be co-chaired, like the January 2006 London Conference, by the UN and Afghans. Attendees will include representatives from all the JCMB member states as well as the World Bank, IMF, NATO, EU and other international and regional organizations. France plans to have Eide play a central role at the conference to help bolster his profile. France does not want the conference to be simply a donors conference, but rather for it to have a significant political component and to serve as mid-term review of the Afghanistan Compact. The goal is to clarify strategy around a limited number of priorities, with stress on the positive achievements since the London Conference. France is planning to hold a preparatory conference in May at the level of directors to help prepare for the June event.

17. (C) Shaw (Canada) did not favor a comprehensive review of the Afghanistan Compact at the Paris Conference, supporting instead a more targeted approach and a focus on the upcoming elections in Afghanistan. Codrington (UK) said good preparation was necessary to ensure that the conference focused on the successes of the past 2-1/2 years and not on the "rather meager results" in many areas. It was important to avoid "the sense that we're failing." Koch (Germany) said expansion of the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) could be one of the conference deliverables.

18. (C) Moon noted that if orchestrated correctly, the Bucharest Summit in April and the Paris Conference could be a "one-two punch" in reinvigorating support among European publics for the mission in Afghanistan. While agreeing that the Paris conference should be broader than just a pledging event, Moon pointed out that the press was likely to focus on that aspect and it was therefore important to generate donations in excess of the London Conference (\$10.5 billion).

Otherwise, the interpretation would be that the international community was losing interest in Afghanistan. In this connection, Moon suggested that countries announce everything pledged for Afghanistan since the January 2006 London Conference. Codrington expressed concern that this approach could back-fire if the press focused on how much of this was really "new money." He argued for "breaking the cycle" of Afghanistan conferences with "ever-increasing pledges." He said a genuine "good news story" for Paris would be if non-traditional donors -- like the Gulf States -- could be encouraged to make pledges. He thought the Afghans should lobby for donations themselves, rather than relying on the international community to do all the work for them.

¶9. (C) Commenting on organizational challenges, Leroy noted that France was having difficulty getting Afghan authorities to agree that the conference should include a meeting with NGOs. Codrington and Koch (Germany) both related that when organizing previous Afghanistan conferences, they had experienced similar problems, with the Afghan government wanting to exclude or censor representatives from Afghan civil society. They noted that France would have to be "tough" with the Afghans on this point.

Elections

¶10. (C) Moon said the U.S. favored bringing forward the 2010 parliamentary elections and holding them at the same time as the 2009 presidential election, but added that this scenario looked increasingly unlikely because of political jockeying within Afghanistan. Moon explained that Parliament speaker Qanooni was insisting that the constitution had to be amended to accommodate a change in the date of the parliamentary election, but President Karzai was resisting that idea for fear that Qanooni, a political rival, had ulterior motives. While preferring one election, the U.S. thought it was important to respect the right of the Afghans to decide this question themselves. Moon said the two elections were expected to cost about the same as in 2004 and 2005, i.e., upwards of \$400 million. Moon said the U.S. planned to fund roughly a third of the cost, as it did last time. Moon also noted that the U.S. was contributing about \$15 million for the voter registration this year, and had given \$4 million to the UN Development Program (UNDP) to help pay down its debt from the last round of Afghan elections. The U.S. hoped others would take advantage of the conference to make their own pledges for the elections.

¶11. (C) Codrington (UK) expressed frustration that the Afghans had no incentive to combine the elections into one because they knew that the international community would pay. "The general dynamic is all wrong." While acknowledging that the international community would probably have to "bite the bullet" this time around, he thought the Afghans should come to the Paris Conference ready to "explain their game plan" for the elections. Koch (Germany) agreed that the Afghans should be asked to complete certain actions by the time of the Paris Conference, including adopting an electoral law, establishing an independent electoral board and fixing district boundaries. He noted that two separate elections also meant two separate ISAF surges to provide the required security, which would also be expensive. Mercuri (Italy) agreed that the Afghans had to take more responsibility for the elections.

ANDS

¶12. (C) In evaluating the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), Koch noted that Germany was "not terribly happy with the draft we've received." It was "not precise enough" and did not provide enough details on what actions the Afghans planned to take. Koch said that Germany did not think the ANDS should be endorsed at the Paris Conference, arguing that it should be considered strictly an "Afghan document." He thought the Afghanistan Compact should remain the guiding light for the international community in supporting the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. Codrington (UK) agreed, calling the ANDS "just a long wish list" and a "delivery vehicle" for the Afghan side of the Afghanistan Compact.

Refugees

¶13. (C) Codrington (UK) argued that the bulk of the remaining 3 million Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan were unlikely to ever return to Afghanistan. Some were born in the refugee camps and therefore never had ties to Afghanistan, while

others had lived outside the country so long that all their previous ties were broken. Therefore, the emphasis of the international community had to shift from repatriating refugees to facilitating migration agreements. Shaw said resettlement in third countries should also be a part of the solution and said Canada was willing to accept some of these refugees. Moon noted that according to UNHCR, over half of the Afghan returnees are going back to Pakistan, which suggests that Afghanistan's absorptive capacity is very limited.

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